

From: ["Brelsford, Taylor" <taylor.brelsford@urs.com>](mailto:taylor.brelsford@urs.com)

To: ["Don Kuhle" <Don.P.Kuhle@usace.army.mil>](mailto:Don.P.Kuhle@usace.army.mil)

["Shearer, Amanda M POA" <Amanda.M.Shearer@usace.army.mil>](mailto:Amanda.M.Shearer@usace.army.mil)

jeff.bruno@alaska.gov

Jen.Mark@epa.gov

dennis.hinnah@dot.gov

brian.lance@noaa.gov

mcobbs@blm.gov

david.m.seris@uscg.mil

bbcc@starband.net

mnicolai@live.com

["Alexie, Moxie" <moxie.alexie@urs.com>](mailto:moxie.alexie@urs.com)

ctc.robertgolley@gmail.com

ctc_env@yahoo.com

chuathtradcouncil@gmail.com

crowvillage@gmail.com

napaimute@gci.net

dcannonnapaimuteed@earthlink.net

[village of lower ta@yahoo.com](mailto:village_of_lower_ta@yahoo.com)

kathryn.thalhauser@georgetowntc.com

will.hartman@georgetowntc.com

ppavila@tuntutuliaktc.org

gary.mendivil@alaska.gov

wong.herman@epa.gov

godsey.cindi@epa.gov

fordham.tami@epa.gov

director@kuskokwimcouncil.org

grocicka@nativecouncil.org

["Trimble, Stephen" <stephen.trimble@urs.com>](mailto:stephen.trimble@urs.com)

["Isaacs, Jon" <jon.isaacs@urs.com>](mailto:jon.isaacs@urs.com)

["Suzanne Ban" <suzanne.ban@cardno.com>](mailto:suzanne.ban@cardno.com)

["Phil Brna" <phil_brna@fws.gov>](mailto:phil_brna@fws.gov)

["Jennifer Spegon" <jennifer_spegon@fws.gov>](mailto:jennifer_spegon@fws.gov)

["McKinley, Lee \PCO" <william.mckinley@alaska.gov>](mailto:william.mckinley@alaska.gov)

[BCharles@kniktribe.org <william.mckinley@alaska.govwilliam.mckinley>](mailto:william.mckinley@alaska.gov)

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Subject: Donlin EIS: Issues Summaries from the 4 informal meetings in Bethel Jan 28-29, 2013

Attachments: [ONC Informal Mtg Notes Jan 28.pdf](#)

[US Fish Wildlife Service Informal Mtg notes Jan 29.pdf](#)

[Kuskokwim River Watershed Council Informal Mtg notes Jan 29.pdf](#)

[AVCP Informal Mtg Notes Jan 28.pdf](#)

Friends,

9/13/2018

During the days we were prevented by weather from making our planned trips to Quinhagak and Kipnuk, we were fortunate to get informal meetings with AVCP, ONC, USFWS, and the Kuskokwim River Watershed Council.

Please find attached the summaries from these four meetings.

Since there were not public scoping meetings, we have not posted these to the website. Instead, we are circulating these among the cooperating agencies for your awareness.

Thank you.

Taylor Brelsford
Senior Environmental Scientist/Planner
URS Corporation
700 G St., Suite 500
Anchorage, AK 99501
Direct: 907-261-6705
Fax: 907-562-1297
Cell: 907-244-2992

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Donlin Gold Project EIS

Informal meeting with Orutsarmiut Native Council (ONC) Representatives
Bethel, ONC Offices
Monday, January 28, 2013

Attendance:

For ONC:

Jeff Ewan	Karen Roger
Roberta Chavez	Rhea Maxie
Greg Roczicka	Forest Jenkins
Rose Kalistook	Zack Brink

For the EIS Team:

Don Kuhle, Corps	Sarah Yoder, ADHSS
Jenny Blanchard, BLM	Taylor Brelsford, Moxie Alexie, URS
Tami Fordham, EPA	

This was an informal meeting, called while the scoping meeting team was weathered in.

Issues Raised:

This is a brief summary of issues and comments. A complete Scoping Report with meeting transcripts and detailed analysis of all comments will be issued in May 2013.

- We recognize there are many opinions out there, but what about the groups that simply want to stop the project? Who makes this decision within the Corps?
- We are concerned about the adequacy of the independent analysis. Even when independent contractors are involved, will the analysis really take a hard look?
- What are the roles and duties of a cooperating agency? How does this work for the Kuskokwim River Watershed Council?
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) takes a long time to obtain. Is there time and are there plans to collect TEK for this project?
- ONC will sponsor a Y-K Delta Regional Environmental Summit on May 21-23, 2013. Could the Corps attend and provide a status report on the EIS? [Don agreed this would be a good idea and welcomed a letter of invitation.]
- In regard to TEK, Tami Fordham of EPA noted that this is a broad term, and that the analysis should not be limited to previous information. She suggested that ONC ask for TEK topics to be addressed in their scoping comments.
- Regarding barges, out-migrating salmon smolts hold near river banks in slower water. What are the disturbance effects of barge traffic, especially late in the season during low water? Fish may be waiting on less turbidity and they are sensitive to temperature.

- Jenny Blanchard from BLM noted that while the scoping comment period closes on March 29, 2013, government to government consultation can take place throughout the project.

Donlin Gold Project EIS

Informal meeting with Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), which manages the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge

Bethel, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, Conference Room

Tuesday, January 29, 2013

Attendance:

For USFWS:

Tom Doolittle, Deputy Refuge Manager	Dan Gillikin, Fisheries Biologist
Steve Miller, Fisheries Biologist	Paula Hartzell, Supervisory Biologist
Brian McCaffery, Education Specialist	

For the EIS Team:

Don Kuhle, Corps	Sarah Yoder, ADHSS
Jenny Blanchard, BLM	Taylor Brelsford, URS
Tami Fordham, EPA	Moxie Alexie, URS

This was an informal meeting, called while the scoping meeting team was weathered in.

Issues Raised:

This is a brief summary of issues and comments. A complete Scoping Report with meeting transcripts and detailed analysis of all comments will be issued in May 2013.

- The Refuge is in the formative stage of developing its list of issues. These will be directed through the USFWS Anchorage office.
- The new infrastructure in Bethel has long-term implications for the 30 year life of the mine.
- Can the mine manage water treatment in perpetuity?
- Will the EIS address direct and indirect effects of the mine such as the risk of fuel spills offshore affecting walruses, marine mammals, and marine birds?
- Is a limestone buffering material site in the Holitna River basin still under consideration?
- The EIS must address climate change and water levels in the Kuskokwim River.
- What are the implications of climate change for the new port infrastructure? What about erosion patterns?
- Climate change is already having significant effects on the Bering Sea coast. A recent storm surge (September 2005) carried fish well inland (10 – 15 miles). In the future it could be a fuel spill that travels inland like this.
- The EIS should use state-of-the-art quantitative analysis for emissions from the project heat sources.

- Is a new mining operation opening up again in NYAC a part of the cumulative effects in the region?
- What is the electrical power required to operate the mine?
- When did scoping meetings start?
- The Refuge will comment on cargo coming into Bethel; the Refuge has a mandate to conserve fish and wildlife, water quality, and to protect or enhance subsistence.
- We are concerned about low water levels in the Kuskokwim River when barges are not able to make it even to Aniak.
- We have concerns about mercury abatement.
- Noise levels must be analyzed during construction and during operation of the mine.
- What if additional or other valuable minerals are discovered during operation of the mine? Will more material and fuel be needed? Would there be more barge traffic for supplies and to move the minerals?
- The EIS should study fuel delivery to Dutch Harbor then to Bethel. It may have an impact on sea mammals, such as seals.

Donlin Gold Project EIS

Informal meeting with Kuskokwim River Watershed Council Representatives
Bethel, BNC Conference Room
Tuesday, January 29, 2013

Attendance:

For Kuskokwim River Watershed Council (KWRC):

John Oscar	Martin Leonard
Pat Samson	

For the EIS Team:

Don Kuhle, Corps	Sarah Yoder, ADHSS
Jenny Blanchard, BLM	Taylor Brelsford, Moxie Alexie, URS
Tami Fordham, EPA	

This was an informal meeting, called while the scoping meeting team was weathered in.

Issues Raised:

This is a brief summary of issues and comments. A complete Scoping Report with meeting transcripts and detailed analysis of all comments will be issued in May 2013.

- We are concerned that Donlin has very little or inadequate data on water and air quality. A synoptic study is needed similar to the Yukon River.
- We are concerned about response time for accidents that barges may have. Village response capacities must be addressed. The KRWC held oil spill response training in Kalskag.
- There are a lot of concerns in the villages about the increased barge travel on the Kuskokwim River. Subsistence fishing in the summer will be disrupted.
- Don Kuhle noted that the KRWC can make people aware of your expertise and services but as a cooperating agency you have to be neutral.
- John Oscar commented that the KRWC has a broad outreach program, including social media. However, we [KRWC] have to be very careful since we are a cooperating agency. John noted it can be difficult to approach the villages and not be in favor or against the Donlin Gold Project.
- The KRWC is also working closely with the Upper Kuskokwim River communities in the vicinity of McGrath.
- What happens at the mine could affect all the way up and down the Kuskokwim River.
- KRWC is a cooperating agency, and as such have a huge role in helping prepare the EIS, which must use both local knowledge and western science. Outreach efforts by the cooperating agencies are important too.

- The KRWC mentioned that communication can be a problem, especially in translating the EIS process into Yup'ik. It is not just vocabulary, as things like the “grace period” between question and answer are very important in the cultural pattern. People seek to “use the least number of words with the most impact.” It would be good if Donlin would work with other organizations in the region, and with the Alaska Native Language Center to develop the specialized mining vocabulary. The KRWC offered to follow up with Donlin gold on this offer to help with vocabulary development.
- Since the Yupik language has many dialects, it can't be just one person translating.
- KRWC asked: What messages are we giving people in the region about how to comment or to have input to the EIS process? The EIS process should provide summary points to the Tribal Village Administrators on the EIS process.
- Radio would be the best way to communicate with the public on the Donlin Gold Project. KRWC recommended a radio show that lasts at least 2 hours; 1 hour in English and 1 hour in Yupik.
- KRWC and the agency representatives provided an overview of their experience and roles in the EIS project.
- What would it take to insure that any benefits of the project, such as income and employment, remained in the region, rather than seeing the village residents working folks move to Anchorage? Is it land available for houses in the villages? Adequate services like water and sewer?
- Families in the region are suffering from economic hardship now, and some families relocate hoping to lower their cost of living. It is very expensive to live in the smaller communities.
- In closing comments, the KRWC emphasized the importance of planning ahead for training so that local residents have an opportunity to work on the project. The training should include the blue collar trades, but also the white collar professions in science and engineering.

Donlin Gold Project EIS

Informal meeting with AVCP Representatives
Bethel, AVCP Offices
Monday, January 28, 2013

Attendance:

For AVCP:

Steve Street

Don Wedll

For EIS Team:

Don Kuhle, Corps

Jenny Blanchard, BLM

Tami Fordham, EPA

Sarah Yoder, ADHSS

Taylor Brelsford, Moxie Alexie, URS

This was an informal meeting, called while the scoping meeting team was weathered in.

Issues Raised:

This is a brief summary of issues and comments. A complete Scoping Report with meeting transcripts and detailed analysis of all comments will be issued in May 2013.

- AVCP Natural Resources has to prioritize the fisheries issues, so the NEPA and Cultural Resources staff are monitoring the Donlin EIS project.
- EPA previously conducted meetings in the region regarding mining, and with turnover in regional organizations' personnel over the past two years; it would be useful to hold these meetings again.
- The characterization of potential for acid rock drainage is based on too small a sample.
- The EIS must truly perform an independent analysis of the technical studies prepared by Donlin Gold, including a close look at the potential for acid rock draining from waste rock.
- It is critical to continue to build understanding in the region of the project. It would be useful to have flyers that include a problem statement (like acid rock drainage) and then provide additional information on proposed management actions to reduce the risk.
- In the big picture (or long-term perspective) of culture change, who gets to decide on this project, and what if the views of the Elders are just left behind?
- This project is of a scale that is very hard to assess. There will be some "ooh, didn't think of that..." episodes in preparing this EIS. For example, moisture regimes are changing due to climate change.
- What is the standard for the hydrology analysis? Should it be the 100-year event or the 1,000-year event?

- What is the need for fuel oil transported up the Kuskokwim River, and is the transportation plan realistic. What is the speed of the barges and the effects of barge wakes on river bank erosion?
- Does barge movement increase turbidity in a way that increases temperature?
- Shoreline erosion is a serious problem, particularly with climate change. The barge traffic could add to erosion that is currently damaging historic sites along the river.
- You should make use of the Calista Elders Council and their new regional data base for Traditional Cultural Properties.